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Nietzsche

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NIETZSCHE

"Tod dem Schwachen"

On account of the attention which Nietzsche has been attracting of late, the occasion seems a favourable one for reviewing once more his life and work. In a letter to one of his acquaintances, written in March, 1884, he himself prophesies with the proverbial modesty of genius that "in fifty years, perhaps, will the eyes of some few (or of one, for it requires genius) be opened to what has been done through me. For the present, however, it is not only difficult but quite impossible (in accordance with the laws of 'perspective') to speak of me publicly without falling boundlessly short of the truth." To be sure, the time of which he spoke is not yet up; but since men's eyes are turned in that direction, it is fair to assume that the subject is not without interest at present.

I. Life

As for his life the task is comparatively easy. In one sense his thought is his life. But although his life is singularly narrow, his thought, as often happens in such cases, is unintelligible without an understanding of his character; and hence the very paucity of incident serves only to increase the difficulty of exposition. A rich and varied existence is virtually self-explanatory; a limited and unadventurous one, on the contrary, since it offers little or no surface to the critic, requires all sorts of commentary and exegesis for its illumination. For that reason what I have attempted is quite as much characterization as biography.

Nietzsche—christened Friedrich Wilhelm after the reigning king of Prussia, his father's patron—was born at Röcken on the border of Saxony on October 15, 1844. The stock of which he came was distinctly clerical, a fact which may account for some of his personal peculiarities, to say nothing of his antipathy for Christianity when he had once apostatized. His father, his grandfathers, one or more of his uncles were all evangelical pastors, while his paternal grandmother was of similar strain.

According to a vague tradition the family of Nietzsche was remotely of Polish origin and noble descent—an extraction which so flattered Friedrich's aristocratic propensities that he made at least one elaborate attempt to substantiate it.

In 1849 occurred the death of his father, Karl Ludwig by name, in consequence apparently of a serious fall, which had reduced him to helplessness some time before this fatal result. On the basis of this lingering prostration of his father's, efforts have been made to prove that Friedrich's ill-health and mental disease were hereditary; but they appear to be anything but conclusive. In later life there is none of his misfortunes which Nietzsche more regretted than the accident which deprived him of parental companionship and guidance during his youth and early manhood; and it was only in the friendship of Wagner that he found anything like compensation for the loss. In addition an atmosphere of bereavement is not the most healthful for a precocious and introspective child; and after the death of his little brother, Joseph, when the family—consisting of his mother and his sister, Elizabeth—had removed to Naumburg on the Saale, where they lived with his father's mother and two maiden sisters, it is possible to detect the influence of these surroundings on his disposition and character. At the public school, to which he was sent at the age of six, he was known as *der kleine Pastor*, the little minister, on account of his decorum and gravity—such is the material out of which future “immoralists” are made. Even at that age he seems to have shown something of the priggishness which characterized him more or less throughout life and was particularly conspicuous during his brief stay at Bonn.

His years in the private school to which he was transferred the following twelvemonth, as well as in the gymnasium which he entered in 1854, affected his development, no doubt, as they were intended to do; but the most decisive event of his youth was his admission to Pforta in 1858. Pforta may be described briefly as an endowed school of rather severe and cloistral tradition and discipline, once a Cistercian abbey, with a reputation for the incubation of scholars. Nietzsche's intellectual life had begun early. Even at fourteen he wrote respectable verse, he already composed music, and was concerned for problems that never occur to most Americans during the entire course of their lives. As a genius, to be sure, he may be thought to be an exception.

But after all the case is not so unusual abroad, and it is no exaggeration to say that in spite of our complicated system of education the French or German student in what corresponds to our preparatory school is far more mature intellectually than the mass of our college or university graduates.

In his early years at Pforta Nietzsche founded a kind of artistic and literary society, with two of his young Naumburg friends, for their independent culture and development. Each of the three members was to submit monthly a musical composition, a poem, or an essay, which was reviewed by the chronicler for the quarter. Every three months a formal meeting was to be held, at which each member should present one of his own productions. Among Nietzsche's titles may be mentioned the following: *Byron's Dramatic Works*; *Napoleon III as President*; *Siegfried, a Poem*; *Fatum and History*; *The Demonic in Music*. Throughout his life, as may be inferred from this sort of venture, he was ever preoccupied—too exclusively so for healthy-mindedness—with his own intellectual development, to which he frequently found his prescribed duties a hindrance or an impertinence. On the whole, however, he may be described, in his sister's words, as a model student while at Pforta in all subjects except mathematics, which he had no taste for and neglected, and science, in which he seems to have made no great progress. Nor is the circumstance unimportant for his after thinking—particularly when his scientific pretensions are taken into account. It constitutes one of his most serious limitations—together with his slight acquaintance with anthropology and ethnology. A knowledge of some other antiquity than the Greek and an initiation into the natural and social sciences might have saved him from several preposterous vagaries, even if they had not modified profoundly the general bent and direction of his thought. From the first, however, his liking was for what the Germans call philology; his favourite subjects were Greek and Latin, particularly the former.

In spite of the fact that his residence at Pforta was his first absence from home and he was subject to the shyness and the nostalgia of his kind, his health and spirits were sound, and for all his self-centredness he made at least two warm and lasting friendships—one with Paul Deussen, the other with Freiherr Carl von Gersdorff, who clung to him pretty faithfully during life.

In the fall of 1864 he entered the University of Bonn, where he

fell under the influence of Ritschl, the philologist. In the first enthusiasm of his new life as student he allied himself with a corps, Franconia, only to become offended by the loose, coarse manners of his companions—their *Biermaterialismus*, as he calls it. It was not for nothing that he had grown up beside a doating mother, grandmother, and two maiden aunts, to say nothing of an adoring sister younger than himself; and he soon provoked the dislike of his comrades by his tactless attempts to reform their habits. As a result he grew thoroughly disgusted with Bonn and retained all his days a prejudice against German conviviality, though he himself became an immoderate consumer of drugs and opiates. Any one who spends the evenings in beer-drinking and pipe-smoking, he pronounces, is quite unfit to understand him or his philosophy, because such an one must necessarily lack the fine clarity of spirit essential to the comprehension of such nice and profound problems as those he is concerned for. The fact is that he was always most at ease by himself, as he afterwards confesses. Extremely sensitive to anything like oppositions of character and opinion, he never felt thoroughly at home, perhaps, except with his sister and one or two of his intimates of the moment—though strangers and casual acquaintances he seems to have found less disquieting than others. A craving for friendship in the abstract he appears to have had; but the type of friendship he desired was that of master and disciple. Like most of us he probably longed for the moral stimulant of approval and admiration; he liked to see himself advantageously reflected in the eyes of others. But most of his actual friendships ended disastrously and not all of them with dignity. It was to his sister that he owed the most; with the exception of a few years of marriage she has devoted her life to him and his memory. To her exertions, it is not too much to say, some part of his present fame and currency is due. She has written two lives of him—a larger and a smaller one; she has collected and edited his works; she has founded a Nietzsche archive at Weimar and has got together and preserved every extant note and scrap of writing in his hand, including his letters, which she has been able to come at; she has defended his character against posthumous detraction and she has laboured incessantly to enlarge and extend his reputation. Whatever her brother's genius, she at all events is in her way a sister who deserves celebration with Renan's and Pascal's, with Henriette and Jacqueline.

In the fall of the next year (1865) Nietzsche left Bonn for Leipzig, partly for the sake of ridding himself of the embarrassments he had incurred in the former place and partly for the sake of following Ritschl, who had been called to the latter university. Of Nietzsche's formative period the three great influences were Greek antiquity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, and Wagner's music and personality. The first of these dates from his boyhood—specifically, perhaps, from his schooling at Pforta, though he was interested in the subject as a boy might be even earlier and played Homer while yet a child. But the Greek antiquity that actually inspired him and seriously affected his life and thought was a Greek antiquity of his own invention, not that after the tame official pattern—a Greek antiquity that never existed for any other than himself. The second formative influence, that of Schopenhauer's philosophy, dates from his first year at Leipzig. In one of his autobiographical sketches he has an interesting account of stumbling upon a copy of the great pessimist in the stall of a bookseller with whom he lodged, of carrying it off to his rooms, and of immersing himself in the contents with a conviction of having at last found the key to the riddle. And conceivably enough there was much in Schopenhauer to suit his humour at this time. Temperamentally there was a kind of perversity, a sort of offishness, a disposition to see things wrong side out that was after his own heart. While conceptually the idea of existence as a representation would appeal to a something artistic in his nature—which he himself developed later, in his own manner, into the dogma of life as a vital illusion, intelligible only as a work of art, the diversion of an uneasy god for the relief of his own *ennui* and discomfort. Nor is his final philosophy of the will to power unbridgeably remote from Schopenhauer's notion of the will to existence as the fundamental principle of life. There is even at this time a prognostic of his future "immoralism" in one of his letters dated April 7, 1866, where in describing a storm by which he was overtaken in one of his walks, he exclaims:

"What were man and his fretful desires to me! What to me was the eternal 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not!' How different the lightning, the storm, and the hail—free unethical forces! How blessed, how strong are they, pure will, untroubled by the intellect!"

At Leipzig, too, during his first year he established a kind of superior or advanced Germania, the Philological Society, and

made what he calls his first friendship founded on a moral and philosophical basis—with Edwin Rohde, a fellow student; “*Weltanschauungsbruder*” he names him.

On the whole he appears to have been at this period a rather superior young person with a turn for self-analysis and *Selbst-quälerei*—a *Quälgeist* in his own words—oppressed by a heavy sense of his responsibilities to himself. In his letters of this or a little later date it is possible to detect those dawning suspicions of philology and philologists and their value as a discipline or culture—even a glimmering distrust of modern education in general—which were finally to make him objectionable to his own profession and which he developed in his *Untimely Considerations*. In short, he begins already to betray a little of that self-sufficiency of opinion which became his leading intellectual characteristic.

In the autumn of 1867 he began his term of military service in an artillery regiment stationed at Naumburg. He was extremely near-sighted, an infirmity which he blames for many of his embarrassments of one kind and another; and on that account he had supposed himself exempt from military duty. But the requirements had recently been lowered, such was the need of recruits; and he found himself within the army net after all. While he performed his tasks punctiliously and to the satisfaction of his officers, he was not particularly happy in them because of his separation from his friends and his intellectual pursuits. His career, however, was cut short in the early part of the following year by an accident to his chest, incurred while mounting his horse and due to his shortsightedness. So severely was he hurt that it took him five months to recover.

His return to Leipzig in the fall of 1868 as a private teacher is remarkable as the occasion of his introduction to Richard Wagner, who was visiting a sister, the wife of Professor Brockhaus.

In the beginning of 1869, before he had yet taken his doctorate, he was appointed extraordinary professor of classical philology at Basel with a salary of 3000 francs. Thereupon Leipzig granted him his degree without thesis or examination. The appointment was due largely to the recommendation of Ritschl and was considered a remarkable honour for a man of Nietzsche's age. With his usual reserves, however, he himself failed to look upon it as a subject of unmixed self-congratulation—he had been planning a sojourn in Paris in the interests of his further educa-

tion; and it was with some sense of disloyalty to his aspirations that he finally set out for his post in the spring of 1869. His entrance address was delivered on May 28 and seems to have made a mild sensation. It consisted of a discussion of the Homeric problem with particular reference to the ideal office of philology in human life. His lectures were attended by an audience of eight—the entire body of philological students at Basel, together with one theologian. In addition to his courses in the university he had some school-teaching in the ancient languages. In any proper sense, however, his professional work as such lies outside of his development and may be disregarded save as it affects the latter through his material circumstances. His growth from now on is virtually independent of universities; from this point of view it is his intimacy with Richard Wagner which is the event of his residence at Basel.

As Nietzsche's conception of truth may be said to constitute the paradox of his thought or philosophy, so his relations with Wagner constitute the paradox of his life or experience. That the same man who wrote the invective contained in *Wagner's Case* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* should once have been Wagner's familiar and intimate seems incredible or monstrous. For years he had known and admired one or two of the musician's earlier operas—the *Meistersinger* and *Tristan und Isolde*. But it was not until the period of his professorship that he fell completely under Wagner's influence. At that time the Wagners were living in obscurity at Tribschen near Basel—Wagner himself; Cosima, his wife, formerly von Bülow's; and Siegfried, the son—and there Nietzsche visited them in accordance with an invitation extended him at Leipzig. The intimacy was soon cemented; the strength of the Master's personality and the seduction of Cosima's exerted their natural effect upon the dazzled young professor, whose fresh and ingenuous admiration must have warmed and tickled the disappointed old sensualist delightfully; Wagner was then about sixty years old and a disciple of Feuerbach before Nietzsche converted him to Schopenhauerism. The younger man, for his part, must have been immensely flattered by the attentions of a genius, whom he himself had had the perspicacity to discern amid the general blindness and density of the contemporary public. In a short time he became almost a member of the family. "After Cosima, you—and then for a long way, no one," protests Wagner in a letter to his address. While in his

turn Nietzsche produces upon the altar of friendship *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, a singular compound—a centaur, the author well named it—in which a fanciful theory of Greek tragedy is supplemented, in the very spirit of the first generation of romanticists, by a fantastic derivation of Wagnerian opera from Athenian (or as Nietzsche would say, Dionysian) tragedy. As a sacrifice to the temple the tribute was complete. The Wagners were enraptured with it. But Nietzsche's colleagues were dumbfounded and offended at its extravagance. Even he himself acknowledged later that he had prostituted his scholarship to his infatuation and had ruined his academic reputation for the sake of the Wagners. As a result students were warned away from the university; for a year his class-room was deserted, Basel was destitute of students of classical philology.

The fate of this first book of his, however, was in no wise exceptional. As a matter of fact all of Nietzsche's writings were a disappointment, if nothing worse, to his friends and well wishers. Even the staunchest of them, with one or two possible exceptions, fell away from him as he proceeded with the development of his peculiar doctrine—particularly after the appearance of *Human All Too Human*. During the latter part of his short career, what with misunderstandings and quarrels, he found himself pretty nearly alone in the world, save for his devoted sister and his faithful adherent, Köselitz, known to Nietzscheans as Peter Gast.

It is his alienation from Wagner, however, that he regards with constant bitterness as the great tragedy of his life. To account for that sequestration is anything but easy. For three years the friendship continued with unabated warmth until the Wagners left Tribschen for Bayreuth in expectation of carrying through the project of the great opera-house. Thereafter the two parties saw each other only occasionally. Relieved of Wagner's imposing presence, Nietzsche had an opportunity to make a return upon himself and to think his own thoughts unhindered. That Wagner had deflected his ideas to a certain extent is unquestionable. Wagner's was an exigent personality, tyrannous and intolerant, and not indisposed to take possession of another, body and soul. That Nietzsche had early begun to conceive reserves, even concerning Wagnerian opera, is evident too. But the crisis was postponed until the presentation of the *Ring of the Nibelungen* at Bayreuth in 1876. That others beside Nietzsche were disappointed and disabused by the performance

wrong side to; while with everything upon which the human art of slander and abuse had heretofore been exercised the most skilfully, I did the contrary."

The *procédé* is evident and it is characteristic.

I have dwelt so long upon the case of Wagner because it is not merely the most important episode in Nietzsche's objective existence and is also the turning point, the hinge of his career, but because it illustrates a peculiarity of his mind without which it is impossible, it seems to me, to understand either the man or his philosophy. From some cause or other his consciousness was extremely susceptible to polarization. Almost any idea which attracts his attention to begin with, ends almost invariably by violently repelling him. Hence he is always at one extremity of opinion or the other without mediating between the extremes or occupying the intervening space. By this mental idiosyncrasy is to be explained or at least expressed his final alienation from all his friends as well as his hostility to every idea in which he was brought up—to Christianity, morality, respectability, and convenience, middle-class smugdom, scholarship, philology—even to his own character and being. In fact, it serves pretty nearly as a formula for all his philosophizing: what else in its essence is his great discovery of the transvaluation of all values?

In the meanwhile, during his intimacy with Wagner, his academic duties were momentarily interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War, which he followed for several months as a member of the ambulance corps, since his naturalization as a Swiss citizen prevented him from fighting with the German army. From this excursion, which was a reign of horror to him and haunted his dreams for long afterward, he returned with a severe dysentery and diphtheria, of which he was cured with some difficulty and with lasting damage to his digestion. How much these infections had to do with his breakdown a few years later it is impossible to determine. The problem of his health is an exceedingly teasing one, upon which it is hardly safe for a stranger and a layman to venture. Nor in one sense is it a particularly important one in itself. That he should have thought and written so much about it himself is natural enough; in the critic the same interest is a symptom of morbid curiosity. What is certain and important is that soon after the war his health began to fail. He was tormented by atrocious headaches and nausea, which reduced him to a misery of helplessness. In one

appears from his sister's biography. Was this the great idealistic movement of the future—this mercenary, flirting, *fainéant* concourse; was this the stuff of noble reforms and vital enthusiasms? Nor was the opera itself with its veiled sensualism and neurotic excitability what the youthful *Schwärmer* had heard in his imagination.

Psychologically it is only natural that as we begin to lose importance for an undertaking that undertaking should likewise lose importance for us. As long as Nietzsche saw his own person interested in Wagner and his work, so long it is intelligible that he should have been the latter's admirer and supporter. While Wagner is generally unrecognized and at odds with the world, so long is there an obvious distinction in standing his friend and in recognizing what few or none else has the wit to see. As his preferred interpreter and appreciator Nietzsche is on a level with him—in a sense he is a superior. He can congratulate himself that Wagner's fame, if it ever rises, is in part his own work. But as soon as Wagner removes to Bayreuth and finds himself on the road to success, surrounded by a crowd of flatterers and fawners among whom his quondam friend is numerically lost, just so soon Nietzsche becomes disaffected. And so too at somewhere near the same time he ceases to feel sufficiently illustrated by his discipleship to Schopenhauer; he is discontented at deriving or seeming to derive from another—such dependency, no matter how renowned, is no longer a sufficient title of distinction. At this stage it is apparent that if Friedrich Nietzsche is to have a philosophy, it must be unmistakably different from every one's else, it must be a creed peculiarly his own. There has broken in upon him the brilliant conception of the reversal or transvaluation of all values. And to this task he addresses himself in his *Human All Too Human*, a book which I take to be the index of the beginning of his second period.

Some years afterward he describes his own state of mind at this time, and the description is important because it helps to span the gap which exists in his written record between his first and second periods—a gap which it is hard to bridge except by a reference to his own consciousness.

"A great and ever greater detachment, a capricious straying afield, an estrangement, a cooling off, disenchantment—only this and nothing more was what I longed for in those days. I tested everything to which my heart had hitherto clung, I reversed the best and dearest things and looked at them

year, he reckons, he lost a hundred and eighteen days in this wise. After a year's leave of absence and a renewed attempt to carry his academic work he was finally obliged to resign his professorship in 1879, at the age of thirty-five, after having filled his position ten years. Of its own accord the University of Basel granted him a pension of 3000 francs annually. On this sum, together with his own private income of 400 marks or so a year, he continued to live—mainly in Italy and Switzerland, wandering back and forth between the peninsula and the Engadine, with occasional flying visits to Germany, now worse, now better, but always reflecting, composing, publishing until the end.

That Nietzsche suffered from suppressed or incipient madness the greater part of his life or that his work is that of a maniac—charges which are still repeated and which may owe their vogue to Nodau's *Degeneration*—such a notion is absurd. The mysterious nature of his malady may have something to do with such suspicions of his mental sanity. Even his doctors disagreed among themselves. At first it was supposed that the seat of the disease was the stomach. But his sister in her latest biography speaks as though it were now authoritatively referred to his eyes, which were painfully near-sighted and which were at times so badly affected as to incapacitate him for reading or writing—a condition which was regarded at the time as a secondary symptom. As for his mind, however, that appears, until just before his prostration, to have been as sane as a modern genius's usually is.

On the other hand, that his consciousness was affected by his ill health, and indirectly his thought too, there is every reason to believe. Indeed, the fact is proved by his practice of composing in short detached passages, whose length varies with his condition. His constant preoccupation with the matter is pretty good evidence too. He is forever trying to make out that he is strong and vigorous or else that his sickness is an advantage and a privilege. Either his disease is but excess of health, or it is a kind of tonic—at least a moral purgative. And his sister is troubled by the same preoccupation. The coincidence argues some ground of uneasiness on the part of both which they were equally anxious to allay.

As an invalid he oscillates between two poles. In the first instance he was eager to justify or excuse his own condition. Hence his early pleas in favour of ill-health and suffering as a means of

discipline and illumination. Later, however, with the growing conception of the superman his admiration of strength becomes predominant, though it is still on the basis of his own experience that the part which pain comes to play in the education of the superman is to be explained; who can not bear pain in his own person and in that of others is unworthy of the election. Physically invalidated himself he values nothing so much as force and robustiousness. Hence his later efforts to refer his ills to a surplusage of health and vigour. Envyng a plenitude of life above everything, he comes to believe that every one is animated by the same emotion and to propose the will to power as the moving principle or instinct of life. His superman too, as the realization and embodiment of this will to power, has the characteristics of his creator. His ideal is not the ideal of the strong man; it is the ideal of the weak, who is possessed by the consciousness of his own powerlessness and who in acute attacks of mortification would like to revenge his own debility upon his neighbour.

After his resignation from Basel Nietzsche's life was in the main a solitary one. Most of his early friends had fallen or soon fell away from him, estranged by his outrageous opinions. Nor was he himself the man to suffer a partial allegiance. He complains frequently of Wagner's illiberalism; but in his own case there was nothing more irksome than the presence of those whom he suspected of reserves against him and his ideas. "I am not strong enough," he says, "to contend continually with all the secret thoughts, the unspoken contradictions of my friends." After his break with Wagner he seems never to have enjoyed free intercourse with a man of his own stature capable of holding head against him. His associates were younger men or women or inferior intellects or characters. In this way he missed the correction that he might have gained from criticism and opposition. This disregard of others may serve to explain a kind of overbearingness in the expression of his ideas, which accounts in turn for their offensiveness to the generation for which they were written. For after all there was nothing so very singular, even forty years ago, in the substance of his thought; it was no more obnoxious in itself than the ethics of Helvétius and Holbach. But its temper is entirely different. There is an intentness, together with a very perceptible contemptuousness, about the expression which produces another impression altogether. It is the personality of the author as revealed in his style—a something

wilful and disquieting. His habit of abusing things accounted sacred, his disrespect for great traditional personages, his manner of apostrophizing ordinary humanity as "cattle" and "brutes" and "beasts," and current morality as the morality of the "herd"; his own assumption of superiority as an "immoralist" and a "*Freigeist*" and a "maker of values"; his recklessness not only of the reader's prejudices and prepossessions but also of the difficulties and obscurities of his own exposition—these traits irritated and offended and repelled the public, who must have felt something of the same impatience and indignation as the members of his corps at Bonn when he tried to lecture them on their manners.

In addition to lack of recognition his later life was embittered by two incidents—his sister's marriage and departure to Paraguay with Förster and the undignified and ridiculous entanglement with Lou Salomé, afterwards Frau Andreas. That Nietzsche should have resented his sister's marriage as a defection is not astonishing in view of the fact that Förster represented principles that were thoroughly distasteful to him—vegetarianism and anti-Semitism—while the colonizing expedition to Paraguay was in his opinion of an abhorrently levelling or democratic tendency. The breach, however, was only temporary; even before his sister's departure he had become reconciled to it—the worst of the affair was that he was deprived of her ministrations at the very time when he stood most in need of them.

The affair with Lou Salomé was more intricate and likewise more amusing. Nietzsche had always been eager for disciples. In the beginning and during his first period he seems to have nursed the belief that he was actually addressing himself to some portion of the youth of his time and country. Of this audience, which he supposed to be secretly in sympathy with such views as his, he dreamed of making himself the prophet and leader. This elect, he thought, was ready and waiting for the word and would rise and rally upon him when he had once spoken it. The disappointment which followed upon the successive publication of his writings was one of the great mortifications of his life. Under these circumstances, when one of his oldest friends, the elderly Fräulein von Meysenbug, wrote him that she had at last discovered his disciple, his satisfaction struggled with his incredulity. That the disciple was a young woman of twenty-four was apparently no drawback, though Nietzsche himself seems at times to have caught a fleeting glimpse of the absurdity of the whole

affair. In reality, the young lady—Lou Salomé by name—who was a Russian touring Europe with her mother, appears to have been something of an adventuress and tufthunter and was probably attracted to the pursuit of Nietzsche by his friends' report of him as a celebrity. That she was naturally clever is evident from the manner in which she played up to the ingenuous philosopher. In spite of her mother's amazed denials she represented herself as a martyr to truth, whose youth had been consumed in a fruitless search of wisdom; and she completed her conquest by composing a poem *To Pain*, which ravished Nietzsche by its reflection of his own ideas. If any farther doubt of her eligibility lingered in his mind it was dispelled by her assurance, quoted in his correspondence, that she was a woman without morality—*videlicet*, an "immoralist." In accordance with her conception of "*Freigeisterei*" she proposed to seek some university, where she might reside in company with him and his friend Dr. Rée, the ethic philosopher. This offer, however, seems to have shaken the gentlemen a little; and as a *via media* Fräulein von Meysenbug suggested that one of the men should marry her. The suggestion proved unacceptable: Nietzsche declined because of his poverty and Dr. Rée because of his principles—he was a pessimist and viewed the continuance of his species with horror—a devotion to conviction which Nietzsche highly applauds. For these reasons the project was abandoned; Lou Salomé was obliged to content herself with private lessons in the Nietzschean philosophy under the chaperonage of its author's sister. Is it necessary to add that as soon as the pupil discovered that her master was not the personage he had been represented by his friends, her ardour for his teachings began to cool? In the chill of reaction her conduct and language gave just offence to Nietzsche's sister; and at last Nietzsche himself discovered her genuine character and her perfect indifference for his ideas. Worse, he became suspicious of some hugger-muggery on the part of Dr. Rée; and the affair closed with an embroilment of all parties and left for years a sour taste in Nietzsche's mouth.

This anecdote I have related in some detail, not for the sake of ridiculing Nietzsche, but by way of illustrating his ignorance of human nature—a subject of which a great moralist might be expected to have some knowledge or apprehension. Unlike La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère he had, indeed, no profound experience of mankind in the large. He had lived for no great

length of time in any great centre of thought or activity. He had known few men of light and leading—save Wagner. He had frequented no very distinguished circles and listened to no exchange of significant ideas. He had spent his time pretty much in solitude, in isolated lodgings, or casual boarding-houses. His study of human nature was confined almost exclusively to himself and his own anxieties. At the same time his reading was restricted for years by the weakness of his sight, while the bulk of his earlier studies was necessarily scholastic. As a result his moral philosophy was in large part *erdacht* not *erlebt*; it was spun out of himself and in so far liable to error—it was constantly in danger of losing touch with actuality and of forgetting Pascal's *pensée de derrière*. These were the characteristics that grew upon him toward the close of his career. It is dangerous for the moralist to make a habit of himself; even the exaggeration of his own qualities is a misfortune. But it was particularly hazardous for Nietzsche, with his excitable temper, like some unstable explosive, and with his disposition to megalomania. With *Zarathustra* the conviction of his prophetic rôle is inalterably fixed. "I am that predestined being," he declaims, "who is to determine values for centuries." He goes out of his way to vituperate Wagner, Socrates, and Jesus, whom he looks upon as his personal rivals. He revolves about himself and his own centre more and more dizzily and light-headedly. Never remarkably continent in the assertion of his own importance—at least in his letters to his friends—his exaltation and extravagance increase from day to day. He projects a systematization of his philosophy and plans to give the gestation of the work the benefit of a visit to Corte in Corsica, where Napoleon was conceived. As the end approaches he loses all sense of measure, and in the final paroxysm of his reason, with the relaxation of his inhibitions, he subscribes his letters with the names of Dionysus and the Crucified.

It was such signatures as these which aroused the suspicions of his friends in Basel and brought Overbeck thence to Turin, where Nietzsche then was. On his arrival Overbeck found that he had suffered what seemed to be an attack of paralysis and that his mind was seriously affected. This was in December, 1888, while unfortunately his sister was still absent in South America. He was brought to Basel and thence transferred to an asylum in Jena. In the course of another year he was removed to Naumburg, where he was cared for by his mother and later by his sister,

who returned to Germany after the death of her husband in Paraguay. On the death of his mother in 1897 his sister carried him to Weimar, where she nursed him devotedly until his death in 1900.

2. *Doctrine*

Such in outline was Nietzsche's life. To summarize his thought is by no means so easy. Not only were his ideas constantly shifting with his mood and surroundings, but he was an unsystematic thinker by profession. In addition, there is an inclination on the part of the hierophants of orthodox Nietzscheism to soften and mollify and sweeten whatever is harsh or bitter or offensive in his philosophy—to accommodate his teaching to the taste of the public and so denature it. To read his sister's expositions you would think it less a philosophy of revolt than a philosophy of reservation. Contemporary criticism too, in accordance with its usual character, has been wonderfully indulgent and has contented itself, as a rule, with picking out what it could commend without much regard for *ensemble* or general tendency. Under these circumstances it would be difficult enough to methodize his doctrine; but the difficulty is increased tremendously by his habit of writing in detached and disconnected paragraphs, whose length fluctuates with the changes of his bodily temperature, ranging from the compass of an aphorism to the dimensions of a brief section or chapter. His composition too was done largely out of doors during his solitary walks or rambles. No literary work was ever more dependent upon its author's health and spirits than his; for this reason his philosophic periods are pretty nearly a physiological record and it may be well to classify them roughly before I undertake to sketch his system.

If we leave out of account his youthful and prentice work, his first or coherent period extends from his appointment to Basel in 1869 to the year 1876 and the rupture of his friendship with Wagner. The principal writings included in this period are *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Untimely Considerations*. I have named this his coherent period because the work of this time has the form of consecutive essays or articles. The inspiration of the period is undoubtedly Richard Wagner; its leading idea, the conception of the world as an æsthetic product. In *The Birth of*

Tragedy he undertakes, in his turn, a favourite exercise of the first generation of German romanticists—the deduction of German from Greek literature. But whereas the efforts of his predecessors were directed toward establishing Goethe as the heir of Greek antiquity, his own were bent upon making Wagner the successor of Æschylus and what he termed Dionysian tragedy. At the same time he labours also to substantiate the hypothesis already referred to, that the universe is intelligible only as a work of art, a kind of play or dramatic spectacle, perhaps, for the recreation of a weary creator. Elsewhere, as in *The Future of our Educational Institutions* and *David Strauss* and *The Advantages and Disadvantages of History*, appear presages of his revolt against the received and current ideas of his age and society—his contempt for German pedantry and German *Kultur* in general and for the reigning historical methods of thought and scholarship. For the modern Prussian intellectualism, which has found such a ready acceptance in American education, never had a more relentless enemy than Nietzsche. Always a *revolté*, a mutineer, an insurgent, he can not be understood unless there is taken into account his disposition to rise against established ideas and institutions. At all events such is the direction of his evolution—toward a consistent and habitual opposition.

His second period, which may be called inclusively his incoherent or aphoristic period, stretches from 1876 to the end of his intellectual career in 1888. During these years not only is his strength insufficient for consecutive composition but as a result and with his neurasthenic inclination to erect his weaknesses into virtues he begins to look upon discursive thinking as a symptom of decadence. It is at this stage of his development that his writings come to take on the tone that we think of as distinctively Nietzschean—timidly at first but more and more audaciously as he proceeds. His revolt has begun. And it is against his veritable self as well as everything representative of his age that his attack is directed. Himself he is weak and sickly and neurotic, limited in experience by means and health and opportunity; the offspring of a Christian evangelical stock; a tame, middle-class, German scholar; a more or less conscionable creature, priggish, thin-skinned, and sentimental; a romanticist by disposition, with a philosophical descent from Rousseau through Kant and Schopenhauer; while the thing he admires is—Cesar Borgia, the bold, strong, unscrupulous, remorseless human animal, the “great

clear to him that he will not be contented with any ordinary philosophy. Of philosophy, particularly of moral philosophy, indeed, he has come to be exceedingly jealous; he grudges her any lord but him. Hence his mounting scorn of Plato and Socrates; hence his rising suspicion of Jesus, though he has not succeeded in rationalizing his distaste for these personalities so consistently as he will yet do.

As his health improves, his temper becomes rather more sanguine; he gains a little greater mastery over his logical processes; his aphorisms lengthen—and there begins to dawn what I will call his auroral sub-period from the title of its principal work, *Aurora* (*Morgenröthe*), 1881, which was followed in 1882 by *The Merry Science*. Save for the improvement in his mental tone and the increased length of his paragraphs it would be difficult to state in so many words the difference between this sub-period and the preceding. The former is merely a development and prolongation of the latter. His ideas are more clearly defined and he is more certain of himself and his mission—or *Aufgabe*, as he calls it. He has become more set and confirmed in his own way of thinking. His style grows more tense and vibrant, and as happens with most authors, begins to react upon his thought and determine to some extent what his ideas shall be. But his work remains essentially destructive; it is still the immorality of morality with which he is concerned. As far as he may be said ever to have had a constructive impulse it is in his next or final stage, which may be called his vertiginous period, being marked by numerous allusions to dancing, floating, soaring, rope-walking, and such like dizzy acrobatic exercises. Its principal productions are *Zarathustra*, the Nietzschean bible, and *Beyond Good and Evil*. It is to this stage of his life, as I have just said, that his constructive ideas, if so they may be called, belong. It is the time of "the Everlasting Recurrence" and the "Superman," the conception of the new morality or discipline, the training for conquest—it is the *ja-sagende* period or period of affirmation.

As such it is dominated by the fantastic figure of Zarathustra as his earlier period was dominated by that of Wagner. Not that Zarathustra is himself the perfected superman or consummation; he is rather the *Wegweiser*, the guide or the teacher of the higher order. In his manner he is the mature embodiment of the Nietzschean heroic—a conception tentatively expressed in two

blond beast," grasping, encroaching, aggressive, disciplined for conquest, the master of power and success, imperial and aristocratic (*vornehm* is his word), in short, the very thing he was not, but the very thing he would be—the very thing, perhaps, that in his Dionysian intoxication he may have fancied himself. Nothing at first thought could be stranger—save to the alienist—than to find a man blaspheming his own virtues in a series of staccado denials wrung from him by his own debility. It all indicates how little he knew himself. He expatiates upon his modesty and warns himself against self-depreciation as his besetting sin; but he has no hesitation in speaking of himself as "the most independent mind in Europe and the only German writer," while elsewhere he denominates himself a "fatality" and in the same letter, to Brandes, remarks that "in ten years the whole world will be writhing in convulsions" on his account—a prophecy of which some credulous critics believe we are now seeing the fulfilment albeit a little tardily. In his own opinion *Zarathustra* is "an event without a parallel in literature and philosophy and poetry and morality," while he considers himself to be "by all odds the most independent and profoundest thinker in the grand style extant." As for any one who has the slightest conception of his significance, he is convinced that such an one must start out with the postulate that he has had a wider experience in his own person than any man who ever lived. In a word, his professions concerning himself are utterly unreliable. But nevertheless it is impossible to understand him without reckoning with this instinctive reaction against himself as a creature of his civilization which constitutes the motive of the second and characteristic period of his intellectual being.

For convenience, however, this general period may be split into two minor or sub-periods. The first is composed of a crepuscular stage reaching to 1882, which is represented by the collection of apothegms entitled *Human All Too Human*, 1878, and *Miscellaneous Opinions*, 1879. During this interval his health was very bad and his spirit correspondingly affected. As a consequence his utterances are the briefest of any he has written—sometimes but a few lines in length, hardly more than breathless jottings—generally destructive in character, searchings or gropings in the dusk of his own consciousness. His line is not wholly clear to him as yet; though as the *Einsamer*, the recluse, the great solitary genius, as whom he has begun to pose, it is

of the *Untimely Considerations*, in *Schopenhauer as an Educator* and *Richard Wagner at Bayreuth*. To a certain extent he is nothing but Nietzsche himself magnified and enhaloed by the fumes of the Dionysian *Rausch* or inebriation. As this vision grows upon him, his language enters upon an apocalyptic stage, which becomes ever more nervous, shrill, and exalted as the crisis approaches.

Such are Nietzsche's chief literary dates and titles. To reconcile all the opinions emitted during these years would be an impossible task. There are few ideas, I suppose, in whose favour it would not be possible to quote a text from Nietzsche, if there were any point in doing so. All the expositor can do in such a case is to launch himself upon his author's traces relying on his own scent to keep him somewhere near the trail.

To begin with, then, Nietzsche professed a profound contempt for the value of truth as such. In Plato's *Republic* there is a curious passage, which every one will recall, to the effect that every system of government is founded at bottom upon a lie—or more diplomatically, a convention of some sort. So Plato in his turn proposes rather diffidently that in the interests of social distinctions the members of his polity shall be instructed that they are all children of the earth and hence brothers but that they are formed of different metals, some more precious than others. To be sure he apologizes for the grossness of the falsehood, though if he had lived long enough to hear of the infallibility of majorities, he might have spared his self-reproaches. But at all events in his general principle Nietzsche would have cheerfully concurred. According to the latter the test of an idea is not its truth but its utility; that is, its power to abuse society to its own advantage. "The world with which we have to do," he says, "is false—or in other words, it is not a fact but the poetization (*Ausdichtung*) and rounding out of a meagre sum of observations; it is in a state of flux as of something becoming, a constantly self-shifting falsehood, which never approaches truth for—there is no truth." While elsewhere he defines this truth which is not, as "a kind of error without which a certain kind of living being could not exist."

This, then, is the basis of the Nietzschean philosophy—a disbelief in truth as a fruitful and practical human motive. To be sure, men have mistakenly devoted themselves to the pursuit of truth as a high and sacred calling. But whenever they have

done so, they and the race have suffered for it. "For what has humanity paid the most dearly and for what has it been penalized the most severely?" he demands, and answers pitilessly, "For its truths." What man lives by is illusion, imagination—error. In fact, so riddled and worm-eaten with falsehood is the life of man that it is impossible to comprehend the world as the work of a moral being; its origin is explicable by an artist-creator alone. In his contempt for anything like an absolute standard, in his conception of substance only as a shifting illusion Nietzsche is not so very far removed from the position of the pragmatists. If anything, however, the advantage of clearness, even of honesty is so far on his side. At all events he avoids the confusion, the ambiguity of confounding being with becoming; he declines to apply the term *truth* to a set of connotations which are entirely different. And as usual he suffers the drawback of his honesty. To confess to a philosophy of falsehood would seem in itself enough to discredit the thinker—one reason, perhaps, why the pragmatists have stuck to the name of truth while shuffling away the reality. What confidence are we to place in the conclusions of a moralist who posits the undesirability of truth and the vital necessity of falsehood? The predicament is a serious one: either his ideas are true but worthless or else they are useful but false. Perhaps it would not be improper to speak of this as Nietzsche's intellectual paradox—though as a matter of fact the attentive reader encounters any number of others in attempting to harmonize the utterances of this spasmodic and inconsequent thinker.

At all events his premises involve the disgrace of reason—a position in which he anticipates the anti-intellectualists. Indeed, it is not a little creditable to Nietzsche's shrewdness that almost all our modern heresies—what we are denominating just now our advanced ideas, though they are pre-Socratic, most of them—find an oracular mouthpiece in him—with the one exception of social democracy. He was born to be the prophet of the one-sided and unbalanced. It is they who have made his reputation as it is he who has given them tongue. Only in this instance, as he has continued to use the reason as an instrument of demolition after disqualifying it, he has thrown a certain suspicion upon the soundness of his own coinage.

Be this as it may, thus much of his thought is certain. The fundamental principle of existence is not the thirst for truth—

that is a sign of decadence; the worst enemy the vital principle has ever known is knowledge. The living instinct is in reality the will to power. Superficially the idea is not unlike the underlying conception of the *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* and was unquestionably suggested by his study of Schopenhauer—in fact, most of his views are either transformations or inversions. But whereas the latter philosopher sees the whole impulse and motive of existence, formally at least, in the mere desire or will to live, the former sees it in what he considers the vastly more potent instinct of personal expansion and aggrandizement. In simple terms, life is to Schopenhauer nothing more or less than a bad habit, a vice of which we may break ourselves as a race by a kind of passivity or resignation of will. To the author of such a view humanity is bound to seem a sorry spectacle; his system is an unrelieved pessimism centring about the one cardinal virtue of pity. But to Nietzsche, who prides himself upon his optimism—he remarks very shrewdly that no one so badly off as he can afford to be a pessimist; it would look like sheer petulance—to him such an hypothesis as Schopenhauer's is not only temperamentally unacceptable but is inadequate to account for the tremendous vigour and variety, the *élan* of life as he interprets it. Not mere existence is the aim and end of existence, not the bare sustaining of life from day to day, any more than the discovery of truth for its own sake; but assertion, enlargement, development. No being worthy of the name is content with a mere minimum or even a modicum of possession material or other. On such a theory progress, even evolution itself is unthinkable; creation would remain forever stationary; possibility would vanish. But every living creature, plant, and animal alike, is constantly struggling, striving to free its elbows, to stretch its boundaries, to wrench a little more from opportunity. The struggle for existence, with its corollary the survival of the fittest, implies more than passive adaptation to environment; it implies encroachment, aggression, domination whether over nature herself or other organisms. Look at the very character and conditions of nutrition; we must prey upon something living if we ourselves are to live. Conquest is the law of life.

The genesis of the idea, as related by Nietzsche to his sister, is conclusive to its character. It was during the Franco-Prussian War, in which he took part as member of the ambulance train, that he was resting one evening on a stone wall by a little town

in the trail of the army. All of a sudden he was roused from his reverie by the thundering hoofs of a squadron of horse galloping past, followed by the crashing of a detachment of artillery and the pounding of a body of infantry marching at double-quick. The whole spectacle was so imposing as a display of organized force that "I felt," he says, "for the first time . . . that the strongest and highest will to live does not come to expression in a wretched struggle for existence but as a will to fight, a will to power and domination." Consistently he always prided himself upon his own truculency. In a letter to Brandes, written in the last year of his life, he remarks: "I was born on the battlefield of Lützen; the first name I heard was that of Gustavus Adolphus. . . . I understand the management of two arms, the sabre and the cannon. . . . I am by instinct a brave, even a military animal."

In brief, Nietzsche's fundamental principle is the principle of imperialism, as its genealogy shows. And the worst is that with Nietzsche the conception never rises above its individualistic form. Beyond the imperialism of the individual to the imperialism of the group or nation, much less to that of the race where human expansion may happily find its full activity in the subjugation of nature—to such a collective outlook Nietzsche never attains. His teaching is purely selfish and egotistic and anti-social. It insists that the whole justification of society consists in the production of exceptional individuals. It is for its great men that the state exists; the genius is the sole *raison d'être* of humanity—even his own ethics has no ostensible defence and intention save as the morality of genius. To the "herd," to the "others," who are the mere means or tools for the production and maintenance of the genius, it has no application whatsoever. Slavery, in fact if not in name, is an indispensable institution for the promotion of this one object for which society exists. All great polities and nations have been slave-states, as witness Athens, Sparta, and Rome. As a matter of fact men are divided naturally into just two classes—commanders and obeyers, masters and slaves; and it is only an identical proposition to say that the former are the state. With numbers and averages and complexes he has no patience. At best his ideas may be said to answer to the facts of the physical and biological sciences—that is, the "natural" sciences; with the moral sciences so-called it has nothing to do. Hence its one-sidedness, its deceptive

appearance of plausibility when viewed physiologically, and its lurking air of insincerity as of one suppressing a portion of the truth, a teller of half the story. And even had Nietzsche supplied the defects in his education by a later study of the newer and more social sciences, he would still have suffered as a moralist from his aristocratic bias. In restricting his attention to the genius—that is, by definition to the exception—and what was worse, to the study of himself as such, he was bound to falsify the moral problem; for the ordinary man, for humanity the main affair of morals must always be a concern for duty, for obligation not for prerogative or privilege; while still further, his ignorance of feminine psychology, of woman, of one entire sex crippled him even more seriously, if anything, as a moral investigator.

To return to Nietzsche's point of view, however, it is evident from what precedes that not truth but the will to power, the instinct of imperialism is the one genuine standard of all values. Since it is the desire for expansion and enlargement which is the vital principle—not the thirst for knowledge or even the modest instinct of self-preservation—it is by the first touchstone that every conception, every institution is finally to be tried. Does it stimulate and increase and exalt the vitality, it is good; does it check or weaken or depress the activities, it is bad. Such, in his view, is the explanation of the particular eminence of Greek tragedy in its best days. And it is remarkable for the persistency of his underlying ideas that the *Birth of Tragedy*, one of his earliest works, should conform in its large outlines to principles which come to definitive expression only years later. That his belief in the will to power should have been inspired by his reading of Greek philosophy seems impossible; it is much more likely that his interpretation of antiquity reflects his study of Schopenhauer. But then consider what Friedrich Schlegel made of the Greeks. There is apparently something peculiarly exciting and unsettling for such unbalanced brains in this particular literature. It is probably on this account that the Greeks whom Nietzsche extols are pre-Socratic; Plato and Euripides represent for him the decadence of philosophy and drama. But in the flourishing of Greek tragedy—a “Dionysian” tragedy—of which Aeschylus marks the term, he sees an heroic attempt on the part of the Greeks to steel their souls to the rigours of life. Neither a weak nor a happy people could have conceived such a drama. His theory of dramatic origins is rather grotesque,

certainly unconvincing; but it is interesting for the distinction it draws among the faculties, a distinction which serves in a measure as a map of his own mind. According to this classification human nature and with it the sources of human inspiration are partitioned into two parts or sides—the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Roughly, the Apollonian is the intellectual; it is the constructive, architectonic faculty or faculties; the Dionysian is the instinctive, non-plastic, and musical faculty. To be sure these definitions are too clear and definite to represent Nietzsche quite correctly; the characteristic state which he assigns to each is by no means so lucid as my statement would seem to imply. As a matter of fact, it is dreaming which he assigns as the typical activity of the Apollonian spirit, having in mind, I suppose, the vivid evocative and visualizing power of the dream; while to the Dionysian spirit he assigns the typical condition of inebriation or *Rausch*, the state of pregnant though chaotic suggestion. The dream and the *Rausch*—these are the two poles which Nietzsche sets to the axis of human genius. For himself he prefers the latter. In this curious symbolism or mythology Dionysian not only becomes synonymous with oriental and anti-Christian, but it also comes to stand for the natural and universal, in contrast with the rational and intelligible, which are essentially Apollonian. It is the ground of nature—the *bas-fond* evidently—whereon all humanity can meet as on the lap of a common mother. It is the source of vital inspirations, the foundation of native originality. It is the source to which the Greek genius owed its greatness, until those unconscionable reasoners Socrates and Plato and Euripides—men of restraints and inhibitions—succeeded in corrupting it with their colourless discourse and in introducing an Apollonian decadence. It is true, the idea shifts somewhat under Nietzsche's hand; at some periods he himself is more Apollonian than at others, though on the whole it is the emerald effulgence of the orgiastic divinity which fills his pupils and colours his vision. In the main, however, this is the sense of the distinction, whatever face it may wear at any particular moment. Nor is the conception without ingenuity—the sort of perverted ingenuity which was a part of Nietzsche even at his worst. It has the advantage of serving as a kind of symbolic or even mythic interpretation of some of the facts of common experience. There is an analogy, even though fanciful, between intoxication and inspiration—a kind of fecund vagueness of

consciousness; while the paralysis of the usual inhibitions of sobriety produces a subjective, factitious sense of enlargement and liberty. On the other hand, the brief though vivid splendour of the dream with its penetrating and haunting visions is no bad image of the formative phantasy which shapes and realizes the crowding and inchoate suggestions of the *Rausch*. Such, indeed, is the upshot of Nietzsche's dramatic theories. And further, the association of the two gods themselves is not without significance. In particular, the figure of Dionysus Zagreus dilates in Nietzsche's mind until it has grown into the antithesis to that other sacrifice, the Nazarene, whom he distrusted so—both slain but to what different effect; the one the affirmer and lover of life, the other its denier and evader.

In the meanwhile, before the opposition of Dionysian and Apollonian had assumed quite these proportions, Nietzsche was concerning himself, from the very opening of his second or incoherent period, in testing the reigning morality by the criterion afforded by his will to power. In reality, I am not sure that his condemnation of morality was not fairly complete before he had definitely formulated the principle by which to justify it. Certainly his revolt against morality was the more instinctive and was undoubtedly due to suspicion of it as a hindrance to the free expansion of life and vitality. Judged by the will to might, as Nietzsche understood it, the current morality of his day, as of ours, has not a leg to stand on. It is benumbing, depressing, crippling—a dam to the stream of self-expansion. Like Plato, to whom it is partly due, its last word is restraint and suppression. It inculcates meekness and long suffering, pity and unselfishness, self-denial and repression. Its code is a series of prohibitions; its highest wisdom is to refrain. Like the commandments its mouth is full of do not's. In sum, it is a morality of denial, a no-saying, a veto morality. It is a morality for the weak and dispirited and lowly, in whom resignation and obedience are the cardinal virtues; not for the strong and sanguine and successful, whose merit lies in conquest. It is a slave morality—and from the slave Nietzsche derives it and by the character of the slave he explains it.

For Nietzsche's philosophy the point is capital. Divested of his questionable etymologies and ethnologies, the distinction between the master and the slave morality, upon which his theory of morals depends, is about as follows. Naturally there is nothing

absolute to Nietzsche about any moral code or standard. He has got rid of the notion of absolute with that of substance. A morality is at bottom a set of expedients originally invented for the advantage or convenience of its promoters. Such a set of prescriptions becomes petrified or crystallized after a while into something fixed and apparently inalterable. When so set, it exerts a superstitious power over men's minds as of something sacred and irreducible. It is quite possible, however, to resolve these prescriptions into simple elements, to trace them to their origin, and hence to free the mind of their irrational tyranny. As the result of such an investigation he arrives at the conclusion that the original or primary morality was that of the masters. It was what Plato would call the expediency of the powerful. Whatever was to the interest of the controlling or conquering class was approved. They were the makers of values and their might was right. Naturally their own characteristics constituted the virtues. Whatever was distinctive of them was denominated good; whatever was distinctive of the lower or subjugated class or caste, as looked down upon by their superiors, was denominated bad (*schlecht*). From the point of view of these inferiors, however, matters would appear reversed: the attributes of the slaves—patience, gentleness, forbearance, humility, compassion, pacifism—would be regarded as good; whatever distinguished their superiors as compared with them—haughtiness, severity, domination, courage—would be regarded as evil (*böse*). A comparison of the two sets of terms will illuminate the difference—*good* and *bad* as contrasted with *good* and *evil*. And if it is this latter couple which belongs to our moral vocabulary to-day, it is due to the fact that the noble values, the values of the masters, have been dislodged by the mean and belittling values of the slaves—the manly and vigorous virtues by the weak and degenerate ones. This, according to Nietzsche, is the great servile revolution from which the world is suffering to-day. It is the feeble and cowardly who have succeeded in imposing their standards upon the strong and courageous. Unable to conquer the latter, they have taken their revenge by infecting the victors with their own disease until society is utterly rotten and corrupt. This is the first great shift or transvaluation of values, which must be reversed before we can expect to regain our health and strength.

In this servile revolt there have been four chief agents or

instrumentalities—Socratism and Platonism, Judaism, Christianity, and modern revolutionism. For the authors of these movements Nietzsche is consistently merciless—Socrates, Plato, Jesus, St. Paul, the French Revolution. They figure between them all that he detested most—rationalism and altruism; that is, falsehood and infirmity. What he cannot forgive them is their triumph. As a matter of fact they have transformed morality in their own sense; they have in a manner proved themselves the stronger. They have shown that they too are a force and that there are other forces than the physical and carnal forces to which Nietzsche confines his attention. They are a standing refutation of his philosophy of the will to power. Hence his exasperation. Christianity and alcoholism he couples as the two worst curses of modern civilization. And he means, not the official, the institutional, the political Christianity of the churches, but the Christian ethics—righteousness in our sense, a sense which was shared by Socrates and the Jews, and which was taken up and incorporated in the morality of Christianity. What an age of surprises the nineteenth century was! Here was Nietzsche belabouring it on the one flank for its pusillanimous addiction to Christianity and Tolstoy scourging it on the other for its impious defection from that same Christianity and the poor old century plodding along between them amid the mingled cheers and jeers of the bystanders.

Since the current morality—to continue our pursuit of Nietzsche—is a slave morality, a morality calculated for the comfort and security of weakness, not for the stimulation and encouragement of strength, a morality which is virtually a denial of the vital principle, the will to power—in view of these conclusions it will never be well with the world until a readjustment has been made. For the advantage of the race there is needed a rectification—or in Nietzsche's own words, a transvaluation—of values. It is in this sense that he calls himself an "immoralist," not that he has no discipline to recommend but that he denies the validity of what passes for morality nowadays. This morality may be all very well for the lower classes, for the "cattle-men," who need a "cattle-morality," for the *Vielzuvielen* and the *Ueberflüssigen*. But before life can attain its fulness, before life can "surpass itself," there must be a counter-revolution in favour of the strong and masterful.

It is at this point that Nietzsche's work of construction

actually begins—with the introduction of the superman. The superman may be defined in a general way as the consummation of humanity. It is not a new type or species produced by the process of evolution—with respect to evolution as such Nietzsche has his reserves; the superman is, in Nietzschean phraseology, an instance of life surpassing itself. In other words, he is a being who lives successfully in accordance with the will to power. Since society is justified, not by its average, but by its exceptions, he is the acme of society properly understood. He is the glorification of conquest, who, in order to triumph over others, has learned to triumph over himself. He has learned to say “yes” to life, to will it with all its pains and horrors. For since it is but weakness to revolt or strive against a fate greater than oneself, the superman must school himself to will with fate. *Amor fati!* Then what is, is in accordance with his will too. He must will even the everlasting recurrence—in Nietzsche’s opinion the most sublime of human conceptions, at once the most awful and the most consoling of truths and the most searching test of the superman’s superiority.

Like most of Nietzsche’s dogmas the everlasting recurrence is nothing new. It is to be found in antiquity—most modern ideas are; but what is more singular, it was put forward by two Frenchmen at about the same time with Nietzsche—a certain Blanqui and the well known Dr. Le Bon. Stated in so many words it sounds almost puerile. For this reason I had better translate Nietzsche’s version of it.

“The world of forces suffers no diminution; for otherwise it had grown weak in the course of infinity, and perished. The world of forces suffers no pause; for otherwise the period had been reached and the clock of being were still. The world of forces never attains an equilibrium; it has never a moment of rest, its power and its movement are equally great at every time. Whatever condition the world can reach it must have reached, and not once but often. So of this instant; it was there once already and many times, and will recur again; and so with the instant which bore this and with that which is the child of the present. Man! Thy whole life is ever and again reversed like an hour-glass and ever and again runs out—a great moment of time between until all the conditions out of which thou hast come return again in the circuit of the world. And then thou shalt find again every grief and every joy and every friend and every foe and every hope and every error and every blade of grass and every ray of sunshine—the whole concatenation of all things. This ring in which thou art a portion gleams ever again. And in every ring of human life in general there is always an hour when first to one, then to many, then to

all the mightiest thought appears, that of the everlasting return of all things—that is always for humanity the hour of midday."

Alone in the Engadine when this stupendous revelation struck him, Nietzsche says, he was almost prostrated by the insupportable horror of the thought. It is characteristic of his scientific naïveté that he should have attached any importance to such a notion. As a matter of fact, however, he makes it the crucial test of his man of power—the latter's ability to bear this vision of disheartening repetition and to will this too with the rest of life—yes, even to rejoice in it. Indeed, it is just this ordinance of fate which makes the superman necessary—for Nietzsche is not always guiltless of using his conclusions to prove his premises—the superman alone is capable of bearing up against it; only the superman can live and flourish under such a dispensation.

Such, then, is the superman in silhouette. He is the victor (the *Sieger*) and hence the maker of values. He is the affirmer (the *Ja-sagende*) and hence the giver to humanity of significance and direction. The inconsistency of imparting direction to that which is ordained to a circular revolution or of significance to that which has no aim or goal seems never to have occurred to Nietzsche. But then it would be only too easy to pick out contradictions among his scattered and unassembled statements. Nietzsche does not reason, he apprehends; he does not prove, he affirms. I have already spoken of that characteristic of his mind which seems to me to serve as a handy expression for most of his peculiarities—its susceptibility to polarization; and the same expression will apply as well here to that repulsion from his own being which resulted in the type of the superman as embodied in Zarathustra. And to those who are satiated with the present cult of futility, the glorification of the amiable, good-natured weakling, the protest as such ought not to be wholly antipathetic.

It should not be supposed, however, that the superman of whom Nietzsche dreamed is a creature of unbridled passions and uncurbed impulses. For the perfection of such a human being, when once bred, there is requisite a long and arduous discipline. He is not a *force qui va* like Victor Hugo's heroes. Nietzsche, unscientific as he was in the sense of any particular branch of science, had not lived in a scientific age wholly for nothing. His ideal is the old ideal of violence, to be sure; but it has been modified by the physical and biological ideas of the time. The differ-

ence between his notion and Victor Hugo's is measured by the change which the conception of "nature" and "natural" has undergone in the interval. His ideal is still that of the "natural" man as was Rousseau's, the man without a higher law or will than his own—though what concessions he has to make to secure the supremacy of that will in schooling himself to will what is, I have already pointed out; but that in itself is a kind of discipline undreamed of by Rousseau. It might seem, indeed, as though Nietzsche surrendered the whole point here—and it must be confessed that it is harder to reconcile his constructive than his destructive inconsistencies; but if he does yield anything, he is quite unconscious of doing so. To this Rousseauist conception of the "natural" man, the man of force or violence or impulse of 1830 or thereabouts, he has added the idea of "efficiency," a later and "scientific" idea. In a word, Nietzsche's whole thought might be described as the marriage of the romanticism and the scientificism—if I may be allowed the word—or the inhumanism of the nineteenth century. Accordingly his idea of power may be defined as force plus "efficiency." To the early romanticists "efficiency" was a small matter—in fact, an "efficient" hero would hardly have been a romantic one. To the scientific romanticists, the physical and biological romanticists in general and Nietzsche in particular it is everything. And perhaps it is in this manner that he would justify the *amor fati*. In any case discipline is necessary to this end; there is no power, no conquest without it. His training may be summed up in a precept from the superman's bible, *Zarathustra*: "Be hard." Let the slaves and the underlings retain the soft and emasculate morality of Christianity and humanitarianism, the superman must be hard, not only to others but to himself—harder, indeed, to himself than others. These, perhaps, are the two most comprehensive commandments for the superman: "Be hard" and "Live dangerously."

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